

DECISION RATIONALE
for the Bly Mtn. Timber Sale
(Reference: Bly Mtn. / Swan Lake / Whiteline Reservoir
Forest Health and Woodland Treatments
Environmental Assessment #OR014-99-6)

The Bly Mtn. Timber Sale was prepared under the Bly Mtn. / Swan Lake / Whiteline Reservoir Forest Health and Woodland Treatments Environmental Assessment (EA) #OR014-99-6 which provides for a separate Decision Rationale to be prepared at the time each sale is proposed. This Decision Rationale applies only to the Bly Mtn. Timber Sale (the first treatment proposed under this EA), which is scheduled to be sold July 28, 1999.

DECISION FOR BLY MTN. TIMBER SALE

My decision is to implement the Proposed Action Alternative (Alternative A) of the Bly Mtn. / Swan Lake / Whiteline Reservoir Forest Health and Woodland Treatments Environmental Assessment (EA #OR-014-99-6) for the Bly Mtn. Timber Sale. This will involve harvesting approximately 1.1 million board feet (MBF) over approximately 700 acres. The EA addresses a number of issues including those raised during the public scoping and tours. Those issues that are addressed in the EA include;

- Number and size of trees to be removed (partial cutting versus clearcutting)
- Reduction of ground fuels
- Availability of firewood for the public
- Forest health problems on federal lands on the eastside
- Project Maps
- Impact on deer herds
- Access into the area and on-going trash and dumping problems in Bly Mtn. Area
- Roadless areas \geq 1000 acres
- Treatment of older forest stands
- Roads (new construction and obliteration)
- Salvage
- Soil disturbance
- Vegetation disturbance
- Use of prescribed fire
- Riparian Reserve treatments
- Watershed Analysis

Some of the public scoping issues that were raised are not applicable to the proposed treatments because the proposed treatments are outside the Northwest Forest Plan geographic boundary and the issue is non-existent in the area. These issues include:

- Soil and Vegetation disturbance in Key Watersheds (No Key Watersheds in the project area)
- Soil and Vegetation disturbance in Municipal Watersheds (No Municipal Watersheds in project area)
- Activities in late successional reserves (Outside NFP boundary)
- Surveys for "Survey and Manage Species" (Outside NFP boundary)
- Pacific Yew (No Pacific Yew in the project area)
- Northern Spotted Owl critical habitat (Outside the NFP boundary - Eastside sale)
- Fragmentation of large blocks of mature forest (No large blocks of mature forest)

The treatment area is outside the known range of the Northern Spotted Owl and the boundary of the area analyzed in the Northwest Forest Plan. Informal consultation has been completed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the entire analysis area (Bly Mtn., Swan Lake Rim, and Whiteline Reservoir) for Lost River and short nose suckers and bald eagles. A "no effect" determination has been made for Lost River and short nose suckers and a "may effect, not likely

to adversely effect" determination has been made for bald eagles. The Bly Mtn. Timber Sale is the first advertised sale within the Bly Mtn. / Swan Lake Rim / Whiteline Reservoir Forest Health and Woodland Treatment EA analysis area.

DECISION RATIONALE

The decision is consistent with the goals and objectives of the:

Final Klamath Falls Resource Area Resource Management Plan (RMP) and its Record of Decision (June 1995).

Klamath Falls Resource Area Fire Management EA (OR-014-94-09)

Klamath Falls Resource Area Integrated Weed Control Plan EA (OR-014-93-09).

The proposed treatments and projects are being planned under the direction of:

- Range Reform FEIS (August 1995)
- Standards For Rangeland Health And Guidelines For Livestock Management For Public Lands Administered By The Bureau Of Land Management In The State Of Oregon And Washington (August 12, 1997)
- Final Environmental Impact Statement, Vegetation Treatment On BLM Lands In Thirteen Western States(1991)
- Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project/Eastside Draft Environmental Impact Statement (ICBEMP)May 1997.

A comparison of the proposed treatments with the direction of the preferred alternative in the draft EIS for ICBEMP indicates that the proposed action meets the intent and general direction of that alternative. The final decision for ICBEMP could amend direction for future treatment under this EA .

As noted in the FONSI determination, the impacts created by the above decision do not require further analysis.

Alternative A was selected because it represents the major prescription provided by the Klamath Falls RMP. All impacts identified in this assessment and identified by the general public are within the scope of the FEIS. Soil disturbance levels continue to be monitored annually to determine if impacts exceed those analyzed in the Klamath Falls FEIS. Two seasons of pre and post treatment stand exams of RMP timber sales indicate that post-harvest stand characteristics (including canopy closure, residual large tree component, structure, and down woody material) are in compliance with the Klamath Falls RMP. In addition, post-harvest biological surveys are indicating that post-harvest stands are continuing to serve as late successional habitat. Post-harvest stand exams are also indicating that follow-up prescribe fires (underburns) are possible to further reduce fire risks.

Alternative B (exclude Swan Lake Rim) was rejected because the density and juniper encroachment issue is relevant to forest and woodlands on Swan Lake Rim. If helicopter logging on Swan Lake Rim is too costly, only those commercial forest stands that can be ground based logged will be treated.

Alternative C (salvage only) was also rejected because it does not adequately address density control needed to improve stand resiliency. The Roaming Salvage Timber Sale Environmental Assessment (EA # OR-014-96-02) address salvage harvest in the Klamath Falls Resource Area.

Alternative D (no treatment) was rejected because it would not resolve the immediate need to address manual density control concerns for improved forest health in the areas covered under the environmental analysis. The only density control under Alternative D would be through the use of prescribed fire. Although prescribed fire has proven to be an effective way to reduce densities, prescribed fire may sometimes result in loss of entire patches/canopy, preferred species, and larger trees in areas where fuel loads and risks are high and uncontrollable. Deferring harvest would result in continued suppression and loss of existing shade-intolerant

species (ponderosa pine, sugar pine, and Douglas-fir). Existing conditions would not significantly improve if the areas were deferred from harvest. The impacts of future harvest would not vary substantially from those anticipated under the proposed action. Under the no treatment alternative, the ongoing mortality in many existing stands may result in deteriorated stand conditions, increased fuel loads, and a corresponding increased risk of stand-replacing wildfires. Alternative D provides no economic benefit to communities associated with harvesting and processing forest products.

Mitigating Measures

- 1) During the public scoping, there was some requests that firewood be made available upon completion of harvesting. Some additional requirements will be incorporated into the Timber Sale Contract that would allow easier access to residual slash. However, the Purchaser is entitled to all wood designated for removal and there is no guarantee that there would be any firewood available if the Purchaser chooses to remove the nonmerchantable material. Some of the juniper woodland treatments should provide some fuel wood material for local residents.

- 2) One of the issues raised during the public scoping and tours was the illegal dumping of trash on public lands in the area. The Klamath Falls Resource Area is in the initial phase of planning a clean-up of illegal dump sites in the Klamath Forest Estates Area. The community will be asked to volunteer with the cleanup. In addition, the BLM's law enforcement officer is investigating the present sites to determine if hazardous material is involved and responsible parties.

Teri Raml
Klamath Falls Resource Area Manager

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